

23 Feb 2011

**RABIES - IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND PATIENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Rabies is a highly fatal infection** that is caused by a virus and characterized by a sudden and deep-seated sickness that affects the brain and central nervous system.

**Rabies disease is usually transmitted by the bite of an animal infected with the rabies virus.** Rabies has a nearly worldwide distribution and affects animals on every continent in the northern hemisphere. In South Texas, the presence of rabies has been decreased in coyotes and gray foxes by the use of rabies vaccine impregnated animal baits in strategic areas of the state. This vaccine bait strategy has resulted in a greatly reduced risk of rabies in domestic animals and people. Rabies continues to be a serious problem in skunks and in bats. **Exposure of persons to skunks or bats usually dictates more liberal use of rabies biological preventive treatments, especially:**

In situations in which a bat is physically present and the person(s) cannot reasonably exclude the possibility of a bite exposure, post exposure prophylaxis should be given unless prompt capture and testing of the bat has excluded rabies infection (MMWR 1996; 45:209).

Every effort must be made to provide consistent, detailed, and **rapid reporting of all animal bites** as well as skillful wound management and proper immune therapy when indicated, including rabies immune globulin (RIG) for specific passive immunity and rabies vaccine for specific active immunity. Tetanus diphtheria (Td) vaccine and tetanus immune globulin (TIG) may also be indicated in some patients.

If the animal bite occurred on the base, be prepared to provide medical personnel and Veterinary Officers all of the information required about the animal, i.e., breed, color, size, location, owner, rabies vaccine history, circumstances of attack (provocation or not).

**If the animal bite occurred off base, all cases - without exception - will be reported to:**

Corpus Christi  
Nueces County Public Health District  
Animal Care Service  
2626 Holly Road  
Corpus Christi, Texas 78416  
Telephone: 826-2489 Emergency Only: 886-2600

The best method to ensure that a biting domestic animal has not transmitted rabies is by quarantine and observation of the animal for ten days. In wild animals - bats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons, opossums, skunks, etc., signs of rabies cannot be interpreted reliably. Any animal considered at high risk for rabies (refer to the TDH Guide, Rabies Prevention in Texas, 2007) that bites or scratches should be killed at once without damage to the head. The head should then be submitted for laboratory examination for rabies.

I have read and understand the above listed rabies important information and patient responsibilities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Patient or Legal Guardian      Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature, Witness      Date